

Christian Morality Versus Natural Morality.

BY REV. B. W. WILLIAMS.

Secularists, when contending against the use of the Bible in the public schools, sometimes gravely tell us that they are not opposed to all moral teaching, but only to the Christian theory of morals; they favor the teaching of natural morality. Among the "Nine Demands of Liberalism" there is one to the effect that all laws favoring Christian morality shall be abrogated, and that all our laws shall be conformed to the requirements of natural morality. In order that we may rightly judge as to the relative merits of the two codes, let us institute a comparison—or rather a contrast—between them. This will aid us in making the choice intelligently.

Christian morality is that pure, wholesome, and benevolent system of ethics taught in the Christian Scriptures; natural morality is that loose, intangible, and licentious code of morals afforded by the light of nature. Which shall we enforce and practice? Let us take a few specimens from each.

The ten commandments, interpreted in the light of the sermon on the Mount and the life and example of Christ, form a brief but comprehensive epitome of Scriptural morality. Rightly considered, they condemn every vice, and enjoin every virtue. They are still more briefly summarized by the Saviour in the command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Luke 10: 27. Jesus laid down the Golden Rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Matt. 7: 12. James says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." James 1: 27. Paul says, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." Rom. 12: 9. He emphatically denounces such crimes as "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like;" and he plainly declares that "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Gal. 5: 19, 21. The whole tenor of the Bible is to teach us that "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Titus 2: 12. These are specimens of the pure and perfect morality taught in the Christian Scriptures.

We next inquire as to that vague, doubtful, non-descript something termed "natural morality." In order to fully understand it we must notice the lives and teachings of its prominent votaries. Let us notice the kind of morality taught and practiced by some leading champions of unbelief who rejected the morality of the Bible, and were guided only by the light of nature.

Hume maintained that pleasure or profit is the test of morals; that "suicide is lawful and commendable," and that the Seventh Commandment is not binding on either sex. Bolingbroke taught that "the chief end of man is to gratify the appetites and propensities of his animal nature." Rousseau, according to his own confession, was a habitual liar, thief, libertine, and debauchee. Voltaire, we are told, "contended for the unlimited gratification of the sexual appetites, and was a sensualist of the lowest type." Lord Herbert apologized for lewdness, and argued that the "indulgence of lust and anger is no more to be blamed than thirst or drowsiness." Helvetius moralized on this wise: "It is not agreeable to policy to regard adultery as a vice, in a moral sense. If men will call it a vice, they must confess that there are vices which are useful in certain countries and ages."

Thus we see that while Christian morality enjoins truth, honesty, virtue, chastity, temperance, benevolence, the love of man, and the fear of God, natural morality allows falsehood, dishonesty, sensuality, vulgarity, obscenity, profanity, and wickedness of every kind. I now call attention to the following points of contrast between Christian morality and natural morality.

1. Christian morality is derived from the unerring Word of God; natural morality is deduced from the fallible maxims of men.

2. Christian morality exhibits the principles of vice and virtue in clear and unmistakable terms; natural morality leaves them in obscurity and uncertainty.

3. Christian morality regards both the outward conduct and the motives of the heart; natural morality considers only the overt act.

4. Christian morality has its fundamental support in religious truth: natural morality has no support other than mere expediency, utility, or self-interest.

5. Christian morality prescribes our duty to both God and man; natural morality has reference only to our duty to man.

6. Christian morality teaches men to practice virtue because it is right; natural morality requires virtuous conduct only as a matter of policy.

7. Christian morality encourages men to be good by the rewards promised to the righteous; natural morality offers no such encouragements.

8. Christian morality restrains men from vice by the punishments threatened to the wicked; natural morality affords no such restraints.

9. Christian morality impels men to righteousness by a sense of their obligation to God; natural morality offers no such incentives.

10. Christian morality finds a solid foundation for virtuous character in the renovation of the heart; natural morality affords no such basis for virtuous character.

Other points might be enumerated, but these will suffice. In view of these considerations, it would seem that the effort to substitute natural morality for Christian morality is a deliberate blow against social purity and order.

This is the general argument; its application to the lodge is direct and plain. It has ever been claimed by Freemasons that their order is a "most moral institution," "the handmaid of religion." It is, according to the English lectures, "the science of morality." Mackey calls it a "strictly moral institution," whose principles tend to make men virtuous. But this is not Christian morality, since it is such as can be accepted by Jews and Mohammedans. The Bible which is on the alters of American lodges is not there to be read and obeyed, but to form a part of the lodge furniture, like the square and compass. It can be replaced by the Koran, the Vedes, or any writings held to be sacred by pagan nations. It is, therefore, not in the lodge for the purpose of enforcing morality.

"Equal love to man" is not a doctrine of the lodge, but love to sworn member of the order, who can be but a small part of the race. Freemasons are sworn to falsehood when they promise "ever to conceal" the secrets of the order. The morality they are taught is of so low a type that they swear each other not to commit adultery with certain known female relatives of Masons. The English lodges have year after year placed at their head a notorious libertine, whom an American actress refused to recognize with the applause of all civilized people. The whole category of Christian morals may thus be shown to be disregarded, both in principle and practice; and the conclusion is inevitable that the Masonic lodge, and all secret orders derived from it, are arrayed against the social purity and order of the human race.

Weatherford, Texas.

The Burden Shared.

It was a drizzling, cold autumn evening, when the gray sky and stormy wind made it seem dark, although there should have been another good hour of light, for it was only six o'clock. At the door of one of the hundreds of small houses which are inhabited by workmen in London, a clean, respectable looking woman stood watching. Presently two little girls entered the narrow street, slowly walking in the chill rain. One of them looked hastily up, as the woman called out:

"What makes you so late? Come in Kate, to your supper, and let Carrie run home to hers!"

Kate came in with a slow step, and her little companion passed on down the street. In the little kitchen a snug fire burned, and on the hob was a big mug of hot milk. A plate of bread and butter on the table stood ready for the hungry little school girl.

Mrs. Mears bade her take off her damp cloak and sit down.

"You shouldn't loiter so, coming from school! Father'll be in soon, and Johnnie needs nursing,—eat up your supper, and then take him on your lap by the fire."

Mrs. Mears was busy, and ran upstairs to finish cleaning a room, before her husband, whose work was a long way from home, should get back.

Kate sat down by the big fire, and looked at her bread and butter. Four thick slices! How nice it looked, and she was so hungry! Then she divided the slices, saying softly to herself:

"Two for Carrie, and two for me."

She ate her two slices very quickly, and then she turned her back on the plate and looked fixedly on the fire. The mug of milk was next attended to, and a good saucerful poured out, for it was very hot. Kate drank the saucerful, and a little more, measuring carefully with her finger until the milk descended to half way up the mug. Johnnie was quiet in his cradle; mother was still scrubbing upstairs; and Kate hastily threw on her cloak, and carrying beneath it her mug half full of milk, and her bread and butter, she went, as quickly as she could without spilling it, down the street. She stopped at the door of a house where a very wan, sad little face watched at the window. The face brightened, and soon appeared at the door.

"It's half mine, Carrie—I wish it was more, for you'd no dinner!" said Kate, unfolding her treasure. And she followed her school-fellow into a clean room, where no fire burned, and where Carrie seemed to be alone.

"Drink the milk quickly, Carrie, for I must run home to mind Johnnie," said Kate, as she watched with keen satisfaction the disappearance of her own two slices of bread and butter; and was so glad she had turned her back on it at home!

That night, when Kate was asleep, Carrie's mother came. Mr. Mears asked her in, and the tired workman made room by the fire for the pale, thin woman.

"I can't stay, thank you, but"—and the widow's voice faltered—"taint right as your little girl's meals should be shared with my poor girl!"

Mrs. Mears and her husband looked at each other, and at the widow, in astonishment.

"You see, Mrs. Mears, it was like this; I was standing in the wash'us, and they didn't know I was there, and your Kate ran in with some bread and butter, and some milk in a mug, and says she: 'It's half mine Carrie—I wish it was more; for you'd no dinner!' and my little girl was 'ungry, and I'd no food for her—and so she 'ad it! But I couldn't lie down in bed till I'd told you."

Tears were in Mrs. Mears eyes; for although she knew the woman was poor, she had never thought of this! Mr. Mears spoke out:

"I'm glad Kate could do that! Your husband worked many a year with me, and if I'd known times were so hard you should have had a little of my little."

Nothing was said to Kate till she was starting for school next day, when she lifted the lid of her basket and saw two separate parcels.

"What are these, mother?"

"One's your dinner, and the other's Carrie's."

Then a grateful face looked up, and Kate whispered:

"Mother! I'm so glad! She had none yesteryday: nothing to eat till—"

"You took her half your supper!" said the mother quietly. "Always tell mother, dear; for I would never grudge a morsel of what we have to any hungry child."—PRESBYTERIAN BANNER.

A Model Obituary.

We find the following in an exchange under the head "A Model Obituary." It would be well for obituary writers to study this model, remembering at the same time the character of its subject:

John Wesley, it is said, wrote the following as his brother Charles' obituary. It is a model, a study. Strange that the brevity has never been imitated:

"Mr. Charles Wesley, who, after spending four-score years with much sorrow and pain, quietly retired into Abraham's bosom. He had no disease; but, after a gradual decay of some months, 'The weary wheels of life stood still at last.' His least praise was his talent for poetry, although Dr. Watts did not scruple to say that the single poem, 'Wrestling Jacob,' was worth all the verses he himself had written."

—METHODIST RECORDER.